



‘CONNECTING 100 TRADITIONAL WEAVERS TO THE EXPORT MARKET’

Monthly Report - April 2012

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**Center for African Women Economic Empowerment (CAWEE)
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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1. Introduction

The Center for African Women Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) secured funding from COMPETE/USAID to implement an innovative project – “Connecting 100 Traditional Weavers to the Export Market”, that targets a unique business model.

The total number of the project beneficiaries will be 100 traditional weavers, where the project has targeted that possibly 30%, i.e. 30 of the participants will be women.

The project is planned to be implemented by three organizations, where CAWEE will be the lead implementing organization. Two partner private companies, both owned and managed by a pioneer woman exporter in Ethiopia (Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturer - the training arm of the project & and Muya Ethiopia – the export marketing wing of the project) are the project partners.

This monthly report provides brief summary on the activities carried out and accomplished by two of the major project actors, i.e. CAWEE, which is the lead project implementer and Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, which is the project implementation partner, i.e. the training wing of the project.

In the preparation for the implementation of the project, CAWEE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with COMPETE and preparations for project implementation is underway following that. The actual implementation of the project started in April 2012. The project is planned to have a life time of nine months, i.e. April to December, 2012.

During this reporting period, following the implementation schedule designed and agreed up-on, CAWEE, with its project partner Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, had been mainly involved in the following eight main activity areas:

- Training Participation and Signing MoU;
- Request for Two Months Project Implementation Budget;
- Signing MoU Between CAWEE and Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers
- Preparation of Training Curriculum;
- Production and Purchase of Weaving Looms & Accessories and Purchase of Raw Materials;
- Selection of Potential Trainees;
- Participation in Origin Africa Trade Expo and
- Project Staff Employment and Signing Work Contract.

The first activity accomplished was training participation where the training was given by COMPETE staff that came from Nairobi at CAWEE's office.

Using the templates provided, and the guidance secured from the COMPETE office, the second activity focused on preparing a budget request for the first two months of the project phase.

The third activity focused on the preparation and signing of MoU between the lead project implementer CAWEE and the project partner, Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers. The MoU was very instrumental in clearly stating roles and responsibilities of the project actors.

The fourth activity was preparing the a training curriculum for the planned two training rounds expected to take place for six months, June-November, 2012. In this respect, the last draft of the English version of the training curriculum was prepared.

The fifth activity focused on production and purchase of weaving looms & accessories and purchase of raw materials. In this reporting month, a full set of twenty weaving looms are produced, which includes different kinds of accessories that make the weaving loom a complete set. Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers has also started giving procurement orders for different kinds of raw materials to factories and companies that are producing and selling raw materials.

The sixth activity was the selection of potential trainees, where in this process a selection criteria was developed and, based on that, sixty potential trainees (10 women and 50 men) were identified and registered. The registration process of the traditional weavers will continue in the month of May 2012 and expected to register forty more weavers. At the end of May 2012, it is expected to select fifty trainees, out of the expected one hundred registered traditional weavers, to be involved in the first phase of the training program.

The seventh activity focused on participation in Origin Africa Trade Expo. In facilitating participation on the trade expo, a flyer and roll-up banner were produced and in popularizing the project to all the concerned ones, CAWEE, together with Muya Ethiopia, had a stand at the trade expo. This was the first opportunity that CAWEE used in introducing the project, mainly at the official opening ceremony of the trade expo, where the initiative of this unique project was explained by Mrs. Sarah Abera owner and manager of Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and other higher officials.

The last activity targeted project staff employment and signing of work contracts. The post of the project manager was endorsed by the CAWEE Board approving that the Executive Director of CAWEE manages the project. In the selection of the assistant project manager, from the three candidates that applied for the post, CAWEE Board selected the right person for the position and decided on the salary and benefit packages. Work contracts were prepared and signed by all the concerned ones.

2. Training Participation and Signing of MoU Between CAWEE and COMPETE

Basic brief training, on how best CAWEE staff can closely work with COMPETE in implementing its project, mainly focusing on delivering financial and performance reports, was given by COMPETE, using different kinds of templates developed by COMPETE. In the training, the project manager, i.e. the Executive Director of CAWEE and the accountant were involved. The training was provided by two COMPETE staff - Winnie Gecaga and James Ndiangui, COMPETE Grants Assistant and COMPETE Finance Manager respectively, that came from Nairobi. This brief training took place at CAWEE's office.

In reinforcing the brief training, soft copies of relevant templates and other relevant documents were handed over to CAWEE.

The training session was very instrumental in raising crucial issues of concern and questions by CAWEE team and to get clarifications and responses from the trainers.

After finalizing the training, CAWEE's signature part of the MoU was signed by its Executive Director on the 4th of April, 2012. The project has a life time of nine months, started to be operational in April 2012 and planned to get finalized end of December 2012. When CAWEE submitted the project document to COMPETE, originally the project was planned to be implemented for one full year, 12 months – January to December 2012, but because of going through the project approval process, it was not possible to start the project as scheduled.

3. Request for Two Months Project Implementation Budget

After taking the brief training and signing of the MoU, the next step was working towards the start of the project implementation. In facilitating that, from the total project budget, the first two months budget was requested by CAWEE. The two months budget request, amounted to USD ninety three thousand eight hundred (\$93,800) targeted on the preparation of training facilities – preparations of training tools and raw materials.

Following CAWEE's budget request, COMPETE took prompt action and the expected amount of money was fastly transferred and reached CAWEE-Chemonics account on the 17th of April, 2012. It was following this, that CAWEE started disbursing payments to Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, mainly for the production of weaving looms, production and purchase of accessories and purchase of raw materials.

4. Signing of MoU Between CAWEE and Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers

In preparation for the implementation of the project, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was developed, agreed and signed between the two parties, CAWEE the lead project implementer and Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, the project partner, which is the major training wing of the project. Attached to this monthly report is copy of the signed copy of the MoU.

The MoU is expected to be very instrumental in clearly stating the roles and responsibilities of each of the signatories, thus facilitating the smooth implementation of the project.

5. Preparation of Training Curriculum

Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, the major training wing of the project, is responsible in working on the training curriculum, expected to serve both the two training rounds.

The training curriculum developing team is led by the owner and manager of the two project partner private companies - Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers and Muya Ethiopia, who has over 25 years practical experience in the area of expertise. The training curriculum developing team involves ten experts in the concerned disciplines - master weavers, elderly people, lead trainers, social worker, and textile engineer.

The training curriculum covers major training issue areas of concern, nine detailed chapters, where each of the chapters has details sub topics expected to be covered in each of the training rounds.

At this reporting period, the final draft training curriculum, the English version is prepared, where in the month of May 2012, the final version of the training curriculum, in the two working languages - English and Amharic - will be developed and be ready for use for the first round training, that is planned to start beginning of June 2012.

6. Production and Purchase of Weaving Looms & Accessories Purchase of Raw Materials

Weaving looms and accessories are the major training tools that need to be ready for the launch of the training. During the reporting period, the production of weaving looms,

traditional looms with modern designs, has started to be produced by Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, which has very rich experience of producing such looms.

Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers conducts continuous researches in modifying the traditional weaving loom in making it user friendly, modern tools that can facilitate production efficiency with a focus to produce quality products.

Apart from producing modern weaving looms, Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers also produces some parts of the accessories, where on the other hand the rest of the accessories can only be purchased from the rural artisans through the existing business links that Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers has already developed.

During the reporting period, twenty complete set of weaving looms, which includes different kinds of accessories are produced, where in the coming month of May 2012, the rest of the thirty weaving looms, together with their accessories are expected to be produced and all in all, it is expected that all the fifty weaving looms with their accessories will be ready end of May 2012..

Regarding the purchase of raw materials, Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers paying the requested advance payments, has given orders to the concerned factories and suppliers for the raw materials to be purchased. Enough stock of each of the required raw materials for the training is expected to be at Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers warehouse in the month of May 2012.

7. Selection of Potential Trainees

Based on the project implementation strategy document developed, Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers is fully involved in the task of the selection of potential trainees/traditional weavers. To start working on this particular task, selection criteria was developed, so that potential trainees selected fulfill the expected criteria set. Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers has taken a lead role in this particular task.

In Oromia Region, Sebeta Town, which is identified as the project site, the place is very much known as the first settlement area of the traditional weavers migrating from the Southern Region of Ethiopia. In exploring for potential trainees, information, consultations and advice were secured from the local government officials and the town's traditional elderly leaders. Acknowledged, recognized and known weavers and other concerned ones were also instrumental in providing relevant information in this particular task.

At the project site area, briefing was given by Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, to a group of forty traditional weavers on the overall project involvement, where some of the briefing event participants have shown their interest to join the training.

As it was targeted in the project document, 30% of the potential trainees are expected to be women. Weaving in Ethiopia is traditionally a male dominated area of involvement and during this reporting period, getting women traditional weavers was not an easy process. When it comes to the number of potential trainees, as scheduled in the project implementation plan, in the first round training program, 50 trainees (at least 15 of them women) are expected to be involved in the training.

During this reporting month, 60 potential trainees (10 women and 50 men) were registered. Continuing this task in the next month, May 2012, it is expected to identify and register other potential trainees and it is expected that about 100 weavers in total will get registered and from this total number, 50 potential trainees will be selected for the first round training.

8. Participation in Origin Africa Trade Expo

Origin Africa Trade Expo brought together business leaders and decision makers from across Africa, providing opportunities for international buyers and regional businesses alike, to establish contacts and to do business. It was a great opportunity for promoting trade in cotton, textiles and apparel – from fiber to fabric, from corporate wear to fashion, from clothing manufacturers to home décor and fashion accessories. Almost 60 exhibitors from Africa and Asia, from 10 countries, participated in the trade show.

Origin Africa partnered with Hub of Africa to celebrate Eco-fashion Week in Addis Ababa. Eco-Fashion is part of the growing design trend in sustainable fashion where a product is created and produced with consideration to its environmental and social impact. Simply put, "eco-fashion" refers to stylized clothing that uses environmentally sensitive fabrics and responsible production techniques. The event showcased the talents of different young designers from across Africa representing Gambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Mauritius, Zanzibar, Ghana, and Cote d'Ivoire. Designs were created with commercial appeal and African flair, many using cotton and other raw materials & accessories sourced from the continent.

The Origin Africa Trade Expo was great opportunity for CAWEE, where the Center was able to popularize its COMPETE funded project – “Connecting 100 Traditional Weavers to the Export Market”, for the first time, as the official project launch is expected to take place in May 2012. In facilitating participation on the trade expo, flyer and roll-up banner was produced in popularizing the project to all the concerned ones. Soft copies of flyer and roll-up banner are attached to this report.

The Trade Expo was officially opened by a keynote remark delivered by the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The Prime Minister visited each booth, where CAWEE/COMPETE and Muya Ethiopia were within the same booth and the booth got the opportunity to be visited by him and other concerned high officials, where this time Mrs. Sara Abera explained briefly to the Prime Minister on the whole project initiative and expected outcomes. The Prime Minister took time to listen to her and encouraged Sara that she has the potential to exceed, connecting not only 100 weavers but reaching to a level of connecting 1,000 weavers to the export market. The Prime Minister assured to Sara that she will get the Ethiopian Government's continued support in all her efforts of connecting traditional weavers to the export market. News coverage of this particular event is posted at CAWEE's web site, www.cawee-ethiopia.org.



Sara explaining the COMPETE funded initiative to the Prime Minister

Among the concerned high officials that visited CAWEE's/COMPETE's and Muya Ethiopia's stand were, the US Ambassador to Ethiopia and the USAID Ethiopia Director, who were impressed by the initiative



Sara middle, with the US Ambassador right and the USAID Country Director left at the expo

The origin Africa Trade Expo was a great opportunity to briefly introduce the initiative of - “Connecting 100 Traditional Weavers to the Export Market”, an innovative project, unique of its kind in Ethiopia, which the project implementers strongly believe that, the success of this initiative can be very instrumental in encouraging other donors and also the Government of Ethiopia to come on board, to be able to continue what is started by COMPETE's support to another higher level brining tangible results.

During the Origin Africa Trade Expo, Sara was also interviewed by COMPETE staff that were here in Addis Ababa during the Origin Africa Trade Expo.

9. Project Staff Employment and Signing of Work Contract

The project will have two full time project staff – project manager and assistant project manager, where other CAWEE staff – accountant, cashier and IT expert, allocating considerable time for the project, will also be involved in supporting the implementation of the project. The post of the project manager was endorsed by CAWEE Board approving that, the Executive Director of CAWEE manages the project. The project being an innovative and unique of its kind to be implemented in the country, the Board noted that CAWEE in partnership with the other project partners, need to show tangible results and for this reason, the involvement of CAWEE's Director as the project manager was considered very relevant.

In the selection process of the assistant project manager, form the three candidates that applied for the post, CAWEE Board, in its 38th meeting, selected the right person for the position. The Board further decided on the salary and benefit packages of the project staff. Following the Board decision, CAWEE office prepared terms of reference/job description for the project staff and contract agreements were prepared and signed between the concerned ones. Attached to this report is copy of the work contracts signed.

10. Constraints Faced during the Reporting Period

During the first month of the project implementation, i.e. this reporting period, the following major constraints were faced:

- The production of the weaving looms, is taking some time, this might be a problem to start the planned training on time, if all the tools required for the training are not ready at the expected time. The project team will do all its level best working on that.

Money was disbursed to Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers on the 20th of April, since the purchase of the different components and accessories of the weaving loom for production took some time, on this reporting month, twenty weaving looms were produced. It is envisaged that if in case the rest of the expected weaving looms, together with all their accessories cannot get finalized in the next month of May 2012, there might be a possibility that the first round training might not be launched as planned, i.e. June 1st 012, it might be postponed by few days, i.e. possibly to start the training June 7/8, 2012.

- The unavailability of potential women trainees, as expected was a challenge that the project team faced during the reporting period. As weaving being a male dominated area of involvement, it was not an easy exercise to find women potential trainees/women traditional weavers. Even if this is the case, in the search for the women traditional weavers, the project team will continue working hard to be able to meet the planned target, i.e. involving 30% women trainees.

When CAWEE submitted the project document to COMPETE, originally the project was planned to be implemented for one full year, 12 months – January to December 2012, but because of going through project approval process and the process of working on a new bank account for CAWEE-Chemonics, it was not possible to start the project as planned. The project team will do all its level best in finalizing the implementation of the planned project in the revised project life time of nine months.

11. Conclusion

This monthly report, that covers the period of one month i.e. April, 2012, provides brief summary on the activities carried out during the reporting period by the Center for African Women Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) and its project partner Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers.

In the reporting period, the project team was involved in eight major activity areas – training participation and signing of MoU, request for two months project implementation budget, signing of MoU between CAWEE and Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers, preparation of training curriculum, production and purchase of weaving looms and accessories, selection of potential trainees, participation in Origin Africa Trade Expo and project staff employment and signing of work contracts

This monthly report covering the activities of the first month of the project, April 2012, is presented with support documents i.e. annexes, which can further explain the tasks undertaken during the reporting period.